

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 08BOGOTA618, TRIP TO CURVARADO HIGHLIGHTS SECURITY CONCERNS;

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08BOGOTA618**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BOGOTA618	2008-02-20 15:46	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bogota

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.elespectador.com/wikileaks>

VZCZCXYZ0008
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0618/01 0511546
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 201546Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1431
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9979
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ FEB LIMA 5922
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 1249
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6563
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4296
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000618

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2018
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: TRIP TO CURVARADO HIGHLIGHTS SECURITY CONCERNS;
GOC RESPONSE

REF: BOGOTA 239

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Local members of the Afro-Colombian communities of Jiguamiando and Curvarado complained about GOC delays in returning their land, lack of security and GOC financial support, and perceived military bias in favor of African palm companies. Local leader Enrique Petro told us the palm firms continue to develop land claimed by the communities and employ demobilized paramilitaries to intimidate local residents. The local military commander said his unit protects Petro--who participates in the Interior Ministry's protection program--and stressed that the unit stays out of the land dispute between the communities and the palm firms. Still, he conceded the military's use of the palm firms' facilities--the only infrastructure available--creates a perception of favoritism. Accion Social has helped 600 families to return to the region, but said some communities refuse to cooperate with it. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Polcouns and Poloff traveled by helicopter to the remote Afro-Colombian communities of Jiguamiando and Curvarado in Choco department on February 4 to review local security conditions. With the help of the Inter-ecclesiastic Commission for Justice and Peace, we met with the communities' representatives in a "humanitarian zone" located on land owned by local peasant leader Enrique Petro. The two communities are disputing control of the land with thirteen African palm firms--some of which have been tied by the Prosecutor General's office to former paramilitary leaders Vicente Castano and Freddy Rendon. The firms began exploiting the land after local residents fled paramilitary violence in 1997. GOC officials tell us the legal issues in the land dispute have largely been resolved in the communities' favor (reftel), but security challenges remain. Justicia y Paz also has links to the San Jose de Apartado peace community.

15TH BRIGADE PROVIDING SECURITY

¶3. (C) Lieutenant Colonel Mauricio Moreno Rodriguez of the 15th Brigade told us 220 soldiers provide security in the area of Curvarado and Jiguamiando, meeting up with the 17th brigade to the north and east, and the 4th Brigade to the south. He said the military has forced the FARC's 57th Front to the south, and claimed that new criminal groups, such as the Aguilas Negras, have little presence in the area. The military tries to be neutral in the land dispute between local peasants and the African palm firms--leaving the issue to the courts--but both sides try to manipulate the military to support their position. Control of a local road--built by the firms on land claimed by the communities--remains a source of tension. The local commander conceded that the military's use of facilities built by the palm firms--the only infrastructure in the remote region--creates a perception among local residents that the military favors the firms.

¶4. (C) Moreno said there is no police presence in the region, with the closest Colombian National Police (CNP) station located fifteen miles to the north in Bajira. He was aware of local peasant leader Enrique Petro's participation in the Minister of Interior and Justice's protection program due to death threats he has received as a community leader. The military maintains daily contact with Petro, but is careful not to enter the "humanitarian zone" on his property. The residents of the zone have declared it off limits to all armed actors, including the military.

¶5. (C) CNP Colonel Jorge Hernando Murillo Meza--based in Apartado and with jurisdiction over Curvarado and

Jiguamiando--acknowledged the lack of police presence in the region, and confirmed that the military provides protection to Petro. He said the GOC is working in Bogota on a security plan for the two communities to facilitate residents' return, but added that the local CNP is not yet involved in this process. Murillo emphasized that it will be difficult

to maintain a police presence in the region given the lack of basic infrastructure.

COMMUNITY AND LOCAL LAND OWNERS RAISE CONCERNS

16. (C) Petro, who owns 150 hectares and has strong ties to Justicia y Paz, told us the local military favors the palm firms and does not protect him or the road that passes through his property. He alleged that the AguilasNegras--supported by the palm firms--maintain a presence in the area and that the military does nothing to stop them. Petro explained that he donated 10 hectares of his land to other displaced residents to create a "humanitarian zone," believing the additional people would give him added protection and political influence. He noted that while he returned to the area in 2001, his wife and seven children remain in Bajira due to security concerns. Petro claimed that the palm firms continue to clear forest, invest in seedlings and greenhouses, and to build irrigation ditches--despite recent administrative decisions that the land belongs to the communities. Petro asked that we push the GOC to resolve outstanding land title issues, provide better security, and compensate the communities for lost livestock.

17. (C) Curvarado and Jiguamiando community leaders complained to us about the delays in resolving land disputes, military harassment, and GOC issuance of arrest orders for members based on trumped up evidence of FARC membership. They reviewed the history of paramilitary violence and displacement in the region, and noted that their legal representatives have received death threats. Several members called for the granting of collective titles for all residents, prompting comments that it is impossible to divide the communities along ethnic lines because "we are all mixed up." The community leaders said they do not participate in the Justice and Peace Law process, arguing it favors the formerparamilitaries. Justicia y Paz representatives said GOC authorities, including Accion Social, have provided no assistance to displaced residents who have returned to the area.

ACCION SOCIAL OPERATING IN REGION DESPITE SECURITY SITUATION

18. (C) Accion Social officials in Apartado rejected Justicia y Paz's claims that they are not willing to work in Curvarado and Jiguamiando. Regional Accion Social director Luis Mario Gaviria, brother of presidential advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria, said they have provided 500 agricultural start-up kits and roofing material to over 600 families that returned to the region over the last two years. Gaviria conceded Accion Social does not work with the "humanitarian zones," but attributed this to ideological resistance from Justicia y Paz. Gaviria noted that Accion Social is trying to promote an agreement between the communities and the palm firms to spread the benefits of African palm cultivation more widely and to preserve more than 1500 jobs in the industry. Still, he admitted that prospects for a deal are poor, since many humanitarian zone residents consider the workers to be settlers brought in by the companies from elsewhere.
Brownfield

=====CABLE ENDS=====